

THE
DISPENSATIONS
PROPHETICALLY AND DOCTRINALLY CONSIDERED;

BEING

A COURSE OF LECTURES

DELIVERED AT MONTREAL,

BY

W. C. BAYNES,

AND PUBLISHED BY THE CONGREGATION.

Montreal:

PRINTED BY M. LONGMOORE & CO., AT THE MONTREAL GAZETTE STEAM PRESS.
1861.

P R E F A C E .

TO "ALL WHO LOVE OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IN SINCERITY"

BRETHREN,—I have, at the request of some among whom I minister, undertaken to write out the heads of the leading features of the Dispensations as prophetically and doctrinally considered ; and I have been the more ready to do so, as having found in the experience of twenty years that there is nothing more strengthening to my own faith than the tracing in the earlier revelations, as in the womb and dawn of time, the great purposes of God about to be fulfilled, and clearly defined on the page of Scripture more immediately pertaining to our own Dispensation. Feeling convinced that no safer clue to the meaning of God's word exists than the comparison of things new and old out of the Treasury of God, I shall be glad if, by Divine help, I may be allowed to give a further stimulus to research in that direction. If the mode of treating the subject appear to you short and broken, I must ask you to remember that the design of these pages is more to give a direction to your thoughts than to pretend to supply what might be said upon such inexhaustible subjects. The fact also that I have but the fragments of time to give to the subject, and that these snatches are not the most favorable to gather one's ideas together, will weigh, I trust, in not "making a man an offender for a word." And lastly, as I have no purpose to gain but your edification and the glory of God, I request you to accept this in the spirit of love wherein, I trust, it has been spoken.

Yours in the Gospel of Christ,

W. C. B.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

REV. xvi. 30: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand."

REV. xxii. 10: "And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand."

The study of Prophecy has been so much animadverted against, that a few words in its defence may not appear out of place. We are not aware how much our daily pursuits and expectations are influenced by prophecy. On what do we rely for a continuance of the seasons? Some may say hastily, The order of Nature. But no! The true certainty of the return "of summer and winter, seed-time and harvest," is the promise made to Noah, Genesis lxxvi. 22: "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, shall not fail,"—a prophecy adapted to reassure the minds of this remnant of the human race, emerging from the fearful judgment of the Deluge. Why do we know that it is in vain to expect the spontaneous fruits of the earth? You answer, By experience. The true answer is by prophecy; for God has said (Gen. iii. 17-19), "Cursed is the ground for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken."

And where, may I ask, is the foundation of those veritable dogmas that form the basis of religion, found, but in prophecy. Are not the truths of a Resurrection, a Judgment to come, an eternal abode of bliss, and an endless state of misery, all subjects of prophecy? What is Prophecy? Literally, a speaking beforehand—a foretelling. It is the eldest brother of History, and is edited only by Him "who knows the end from the beginning." But it is put into our hand under certain restrictions, which are specified in Deuteronomy xxix. 29: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever." It is commended by the Apostle Peter in his 2 Epistle, xvi. 19, where, after commenting upon the peculiar privilege granted to him in being an eye-witness of the Transfiguration, he adds, "But we have a more sure word of prophecy whereunto

ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." All Scripture, saith St. Paul (2 Tim. iii. 16), is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works; and in Romans, xv. 4, he adds, "for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scripture, might have hope." If history is so practical a part of education that he is regarded as deficient in the *most useful* information who knows nothing of the rise and fall of empires, surely a very strong argument may be drawn as to the vital importance of knowing the destiny of nations whose fate is clearly marked upon the page of prophecy, and in whose ruin we may be involved. And self-interest alone, if no higher motive, should lead the mind of man to ponder on what may be awaiting the times in which he lives. The violent opposition shewn to the study of prophecy recalls the feeling of astonishment with which we read the determined obstinacy of former kingdoms in rejecting the voice of the prophets. Who has ever read the downfall of Jerusalem under Zedekiah, the entreaties and the warnings of Jeremiah, that has not risen with mixed feelings of pity and anger for that infatuated prince: but what is his perverseness more than ours, if we blindly shut our eyes to the certain doom that hangs over the Gentile nations, or if we persistently contend that the Church "has abode in the goodness of God," and therefore there is no chance of its excision? Rom. xi. 22. If prophecy be a forbidden subject, what becomes of the largest portion of the Bible? From Isaiah to Malachi is all prophecy; half the Psalms are prophetic; and portions of Genesis, Deuteronomy, &c. The Bible is, indeed, a sealed book if we are forbidden to look into prophecy. But is this the sentiment expressed by Peter (1 Epistle, i. 12)? "Unto whom (speaking of the prophets) it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." May we not safely infer, that if angels are right in looking into prophecy, surely we (of whom it is said, "unto us they did minister") may and ought to feel the highest interest, and manifest a patient and arduous research. To what purpose was it that the Lord Jesus, in his great condescension, said to his followers, "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you"; if the result of this disclosure is to end in our declining to become acquainted with what the will of the Lord is. Is it

a light thing to be brought into the privilege of Abraham, of whom it was said, "Shall I hide from Abraham, my friend, the thing that I do?" Shall we despise our birthright thus? But, what are the objections to the study of prophecy? Some say—"It's not practical, but purely speculative." Now, one effect of prophecy is to teach a Christian not only what he is redeemed *from*, but what he is redeemed *for*; to shew him that "he is a king and priest unto God"; that the world out of which he is redeemed is under sentence; that he is called to live in holy separation from the world, unspotted from the flesh; that all things are hastening to their consummation; and that this memorandum is at the head of all his transactions, 1 Cor. vii. 29-30: "But this I say, brethren,—the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away." Is there nothing practical in this, grounded on "*the time is short*," and "*the world is passing away*"? It is a very common objection that the great use of prophecy is to confirm God's truth after the event has taken place, and that therefore the true key to prophecy is its fulfilment. Now, it is perfectly true that the record of fulfilled prophecy does unquestionably prove the divine authenticity of the prophecy, and is a deeply interesting part of scripture to study and compare; but to say of unfulfilled prophecy that its great utility will only be manifest when the events foretold happen, is to fly in the face of that scripture that declares it to be "a light in a dark place"; and also against the lessons which the examples of the fatal neglect of prophecy teaches us. Ask yourselves for a moment—Was the prophecy by Noah (as some suppose) for 120 years, that God was about to bring "a flood on the world of the ungodly,"—was it never to be understood till after the event? If so, it was of little use to the antediluvians. Was Lot's warning to his sons, that Sodom was to be burned, to be of value after the event or before? Did obedience to the word, "Look not behind thee," save Lot and his two daughters from the fate of the wife, turned into a pillar of salt? or was it to be learned after the disaster? Were the prophecies of the coming of Christ, of the seed of David, of the tribe of Benjamin, and to be born in Bethlehem,—were they only learned after his birth? or were the answers ready for the Magi when they arrived, saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews"? The fact is, our Lord's rebuke of the ignorance of the Sadducees is applicable to us all: "Ye do greatly err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God," Matt. xxii. 29. And

lastly, who are these that raise this bitter denunciation against this most profitable exercise of scriptural investigation? Invariably those who know nothing about it, and who have no scruple to acknowledge it. And until we have better reasons given for neglecting so important a branch of truth, let us fearlessly, looking alone to the Holy Spirit for guidance and instruction, pursue our course. It was a remarkably correct saying of one, "That the Bible is its own expositor"; and if to it we add what Paul said to Timothy—"rightly dividing the word of truth"—we should not fail, by attending to these maxims, to discover its majestic proportions, and the indelible mark of divine inspiration upon every page. In the Prophet Isaiah, 46th chapter, 9th and 10th verses, we read—"Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,"—"Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Let me ask you to weigh that sentence first. The Omniscient and Omnipotent Revealer declares himself—"I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me." Now, here is the Fountain of Revelation; as the Apostle says in the Hebrews, "God! who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake"; "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done." Then, if we go back to the beginning, peradventure we shall see traces of the end; and in the ancient days we shall discover vestiges of events that came to pass, and others that may yet be in the future. Take the first great prophecy: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Now, is it fulfilled? Four thousand years after the prophecy, Paul said by the Spirit (Rom. xvi. 20), "The God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly!" Eighteen hundred and sixty years have passed, and yet Satan is not bruised under our feet! O, sirs! need I add more to shew you the incomparable value of prophecy, and the absolute demand on a true Christian to make himself acquainted with these things; as our Lord and Master said "Write," and "Blessed is he that readeth" "the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." I feel the deep responsibility that rests on any, who, stirred up in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to set in order the things most surely believed among us, that whatsoever he may be led by the Holy Spirit to declare before a congregation, should be so established by and on the word of God, that those who hear should understand the discourse, not only in the general facts before them, but also the special scriptures by which those facts are substantiated. I am anxious, therefore, to lay down certain principles which

will make these discoveries more intelligible in their delivery, and ultimately more useful, by drawing you with a warmer and deeper interest to study the word of God. We shall find the revelation of future events meeting us under four distinct forms :

1st. Types, as is noted by the Apostle, 1 Cor. x. 11 : Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples (margin, types), and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

2nd. Symbols. Such are large portions of the book of Daniel ; for example, the great image seen by Nebuchadnezzar, and the four wild beasts seen by the prophet himself.

3rd. Figurative. Such are many of the forms in Isaiah, where our Lord is prophesied of under the image of a Lamb, a Lion, a Branch, a Rock, and a Fountain.

4th. Simple, as the plain declaration of events ; such as the sentence at the fall—" Until thou return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken ; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

But, as regards all prophecies, whether revealed in type, symbol, figure or simple, **THE EVENTS ARE ALWAYS LITERAL.** Too much importance cannot be attached to this principle of the literal fulfilment of prophecy, where common sense is not outraged.

Let me ask you to contemplate the remarkable literal accomplishment of the few following prophecies collected in a tract on the proof of the Messiahship of our Lord, taken out of the Prophets in order, as an example :—

Psalm xvi. 10 : For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Matthew xxviii. 6 : He is not here, for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

Psalm xxii. 6 : But I am a worm, and no man ; a reproach of men, and despised of the people

Luke xxiii. 11 : And Herod and his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.

Psalm xxii. 7-8 : All they that see me laugh me to scorn ; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him : let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

Matt. xxvii. 43 : He trusted in God ; let him deliver him now, if he will have him, for he said, *I am the Son of God.*

Mark xv. 29 : And they that passed by rallied on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah ! thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself and come down from the cross.

Psalm xxii. 16 : They pierced my hands and my feet ; I may tell all my bones.

John xx. 27 : Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side ; and be not faithless, but believing.

Psalm xxii. 18: They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

John xix. 23-24: Then the soldiers when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also his coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout: they said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it but cast lots for it, whose it shall be; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

Psalm xxxiv. 20: He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken.

John xix. 33-34: But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs; but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.

Psalm xli. 9: Yea mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

Matt. xxvi. 23: And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

Psalm lxxviii. 18: Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

Acts i. 9: And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Ephes. iv. 8-11: Wherefore he said When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive (or a multitude of captives), and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets; and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, &c.

Psalm lxix. 21: They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Matt. xxii. 34: They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof he would not drink.

Psalm lxxviii. 1-2: I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old.

Matt. xiii. 34: All these things spake Jesus unto the multitudes in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them. That it might be fulfilled, &c.

Isaiah i. 6: I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

Matt. xxvi. 67: Then did they spit in his face and buffeted him, and others smote him with the palms of their hands.

" xxvii. 26: And when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

Isaiah liii. 2: For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant and as a root out of dry ground: he hath no form or comeliness, and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him.

John i. 11: He came unto his own and his own received him not.

Isaiah liii. 3: He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him: he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Mark xv. : Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.

Isaiah liii. 4: Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

Matt. viii. 17: That it might be fulfilled that was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.

Isaiah liii. 5-6: But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed;—and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all.

1 Peter ii. 24-25: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, *that we*, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Isaiah liii. 7: He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he openeth not his mouth.

Matt. xxvii. 12: And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him to never a word: insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

Isaiah liii. 8: He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

Matt. xxvii. 26: And when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

Acts viii. 34-35: And the Eunuch answered Philip and said, I pray thee of whom speaketh the prophet this—of himself or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture (Isa. liii. 7-8), and preached unto him Jesus.

Isaiah liii. 9: And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Matt. xxvii. 57 to 60: When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus's disciple; he went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre and departed.

Isaiah liii. 12: Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

John xix. 30: When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar he said, It is finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Mark xv. 27-28: And with him they crucify two thieves, the one on his right hand and the other on his left; and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, "And he was numbered with the transgressors."

Luke xxiii. 34: Then said Jesus, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Zech. ix. 9: Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

Matt. xxi. 1, 7, 9: And brought the ass and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before and that followed cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

Zech. xi. 12 : And I said unto them, If ye think good give me my price ; and if not forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.

Matt. xxvi. 14-15 : Tuen one of the twelve called Judas Iscariot went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

Zech. xi. 13 : And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter ; a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.

Matt. xxvii. 7-9 : And they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called the field of blood unto this day.

Zech. xii. 10 : And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, &c.

John xix. 37 : And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

Micah v. 1 : They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. Matt. xxvii. 30 : And they spit upon him, and took the reed and smote him on the head.

Micah v. 2 : But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Matt. ii. 1-6 : Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the King, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the King had heard these things he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him ; and when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea ; for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem in the land of Juda art not the least among the princes of Juda, for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel.

Now, consider this array of literally fulfilled scripture ; and, if struck with the minute accomplishment of each event, let it teach one lesson, that as the past was pictured out to the very life, so is the future. It was a remark of a Jewish Rabbi—" Strange it is, you Christians take literally all the passages in which you can debase your Messiah ; and then with marvellous inconsistency you spiritualize all the words of the prophets that tell of his glory when he reigneth before his ancients gloriously." This assertion is too true, and may fairly be charged on us, for we have not been careful enough in sub-dividing the dealings of God, in the different dispensations ; and there is no way in which the revelation of God so clearly unfolds itself as when regarded *dispensationally*. The term is used by the Apostle Paul when he speaks of " the dispensation of the gospel," and " the dispensation of the fulness of times." The literal meaning of the word signifies the order of the house: our word " economy " is taken from it. It is used to embrace the order of events coming between two definite periods, expressing all the events, principles, rules and ordinances common to and included

within the certain period of God's dealings with man. The dispensations are very clearly defined, and are eight in number.

The *first dispensation*, which we may call the Eden, begins at Gen. 1st chap. and 24th verse, and concludes at the 3d chap. and 24th verse, and comprises in its events the creation of the sixth day to the placing the cherubims as guard at the east of Eden, and over the tree of life.

The *second dispensation*, or antediluvian, from Gen. iv. 1, "the birth of Cain," to the 8th chap. and 14th verse, "the earth dried."

The *third dispensation*, or patriarchal, from Gen. viii. 15, from the deliverance of Noah to (Gen. l. 26) the death of Joseph.

The *fourth dispensation*, or Mosaic, from Exodus i., the oppression of Israel under Pharaoh, to the birth of John the Baptist, Matt. xi. 13—"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John."

The *fifth dispensation*—the Messianic—from Matt. i., "The book of the generation of Christ," to Acts i. 11, the ascension of the Lord.

The *sixth dispensation*, or "the dispensation of the Holy Ghost" or of the Gospel, from Acts ii. 1, "the day of Pentecost," to the first resurrection, or call of those "who sleep in Jesus," and "those who are alive and remain, to meet the Lord in the air"; or, "those who are Christ's, at his coming," 1 Cor. xv. 23.

The *seventh dispensation*, or Millennium, from 2 Thess. ii. 1, "The coming of our Lord Jesus and our gathering together unto him," to (Rev. xx. 11) "the judgment of the great white throne."

The *eighth dispensation*, or *eternal state*, Rev. xxi.: "The formation of the new heavens and the new earth"; "The new Jerusalem descends to the earth"; "The tabernacle of God is with men"; "God is all in all."

To these remarks I would add that the whole family of man may be regarded as the subject of revelation under three great divisions, called by the Apostle (1 Cor. x. 32) "The Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God"; and that if we be careful, in the reading of the word of God, to classify the revelations of God, so as not to confound promises to the Jews, as if they belong to the Church, nor to appropriate to the Gentiles what is exclusively pertaining to the Jews,—I think I might say that a student of the word of God, exercising a patient and calm investigation of the events of the several dispensations, with a spiritual aptitude to discern the direct revelations of *our own dispensations*, allegorized in types and symbols in the former ones, will at once be struck with the wisdom of "the Great God who maketh known to his servants the things that shall come to pass hereafter," Dan. ii. 45; and will rise from the study with the innate consciousness of the master hand that has stamped every page of revelation as Divine.

I would make one further remark upon the subject of dispensations generally, and it is this: that the measure of revelation given by God to unfold his counsels and reveal his will towards man, was either more general or more particular as the dispensation in which it was given was further or nearer to the events to be fulfilled; but that, whether general or particular, each dispensation received the whole truth, and with sufficient explicitness for the necessity of the time.

Let me beg of you to thoroughly master this idea, for it is the very principle of these discourses, and, in the unfolding of the plan, will at once bring all scripture to bear on one focus; while you will find the later revealed truths, in their minute development, back up the testimony of the incipient seed in the far off revelation. I said it was the principle of these discourses; but I will say far more than that. It is the plan of the word of God: that book has a system, has an entirety, has a oneness about it, that stamps its divine originality; and the key to that oneness, is the knowledge of the dispensations.

And this structure of the word of God is the exact form that every one of the prophecies is modelled on. The first opening of a prophecy gives you the subject in its length and breadth, then immediately returns to sub-divisions of the revelation: this will all be explained as we advance. I will now only add a homely simile, that illustrates familiarly my meaning. Let us throw a stone into the centre of a sheet of water, sufficiently large to agitate its surface; and what do we see? There appears on the ruffled sheet, distinct circles, each one perfect in itself, but each larger and larger the further they are distant from the centre, till the final one covers the whole pond. So are the dispensations; each succeeding one is larger, but not more perfect than the last: fresh incidents may be introduced, but only to make the revelation of the last dispensation more clear and emphatic. And the result of this accumulated evidence is to raise up an irresistible proof, that, with our unchangeable God, His purposes have been of old from everlasting. Can you for a moment suppose, that He, who has so wondrously ordained and ordered all creation, should introduce, at last, a system without order; a book without a purpose; a revelation without a design; a mass of events, interspersed with doctrines, and enigmas without construction? O! my friends, believe no such thing. I deplore with all honest Christians the skepticism of the present day, and the bold and daring insults heaped on the word of God by the so-called great writers of the divinity schools. But from whence does it spring? From the old cause: "They know not the scriptures nor the power of God, therefore they do greatly err." And how shall we meet these insidious attacks on our faith and

on the truth of revelation? Even by learning to comprehend our Bible as a whole, and see its marvellously divine construction. Take the key that can alone, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, make you acquainted with that mysterious and unbroken chain of evidence—that tells the hand that made it was divine.

One very peculiar feature of the early dispensations was the development of certain counsels of God, unfolded in the very scenes transacting, and so naturally arising as to render the actors almost ignorant of what wonderful events they typified; and to this we may also add, that even in scenes that were to illustrate the most important doctrines, the actors were in a very questionable position. Let me illustrate what I mean by an example. When the Lord Jesus was demanded of the Pharisees “a sign,” he gave them the prophet Jonah, whose solemn and fearful punishment, when he said—“Out of the belly of hell I cried unto God, when the floods compassed me about, and all thy billows and thy waves passed over me; the earth with her bars was about me forever, yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God,”—was to typify and be a sign of the burial and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (Jonah ii. 3, Ps. xlii. 7, Matt. xii. 40). Now we at once see that the faulty prophet, who, for his act of rebellion against Jehovah when he sent him to warn Nineveh, met the dire punishment inflicted on him, was little conscious what mighty and wondrous truth lay concealed in this mysterious judgment; and we shall soon see that it takes the whole Bible, and all its collected worthies, each one shining in his own peculiar feature, and standing in the grandeur of his own particular character, to form the concentrated virtues, the commanding powers, the suffering trials, and the victorious conquests of the Lord Jesus Christ, God over all, blessed for ever;—thus exemplifying the great design of the Bible, as revealed to us in the last part of it (Rev. xix. 10), “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” May this thought be kept steadily before our eyes, while we discover Jesus, dimly shadowed, but most assuredly foretold even in the most remote dispensations.

And depend upon it, that if the naturalist discovers the footmarks of the Creator, in the beginning when he laid the foundation of the world, we shall also discover the footprints of redemption in the long six days of the six thousand years of God’s dealings with mankind. Believe me, you will find such a field of holy investigation before us—such noble specimens of the clear fact of future designs, unmistakably stamped in the events of the earliest ages of man—as shall convince you that the same perfect skill that built this world has gone to work to raise the imperishable fabric of Salvation.

Let me add a remark or two, by way of some explanation, of two words that constantly cross our path, and of which we require to have correct ideas. I allude to the expressions "world" and "day." regards the former, a passage in Hebrews (ix. 26) will well explain it: "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world (*kosmou*), but now once in the end of the world (*tón aiónón*) hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Now, here the "foundation of the world" and "the end of the ages" are contrasted; and it must be clear to you that our Lord suffered at the END of the "dispensations" or "ages" that had just terminated, viz., "the Mosaic." The same expression is made use of in all the parables of the 13th ch. of Matthew; and in each of them it would have been more clear if rendered "age" or "dispensation." A contrast of the two words occurs in our Lord's explanation of the parable of the Tares and the Wheat (38th verse): "The field is the world (*kosmos*), the harvest is the end of the world" (*tou aiónos*), therefore means "of this age" or "dispensation." The natural meaning of the word "day," as signifying a limited period of twenty-four hours, is not the only sense you must take the term in. Indeed in scripture, as well as in common use, the expression is often intended to convey an indefinite period. Take, as example, Genesis ii. 4: "In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens." In Deuteronomy ix. 1, Moses says, "Hear, O Israel, thou art to pass over Jordan *this day*": now, many events happened before they really passed over Jordan—the death of Moses, &c. It is constantly used dispensationally: "Abraham," says the Saviour, "rejoiced to see my day." David, in Psalm xcv. 7, calls it the day of temptation in the wilderness, and he adds the length of the day, 40 years. Paul, in 2 Cor. vi. 2, calls this dispensation, "Now is the day of salvation"; this day has continued 1860 years already. In Romans ii. 5, he says, "that the wicked treasureth up wrath against the day of wrath"; and you will see that, as with the day of grace, so with the "day of wrath," it extends through periods of "the day of the Lord Jesus." over a series of events transpiring, some at the opening and others at the close, of the thousand years; and that this "gathering out of his kingdom all things that offend" when he thoroughly purges his floor, and gathers the wheat into the garner; "while he subdues all things under him"; to the hour "when he casts death and hell into the lake of fire"; "when the great white throne is set up,"—forms a period of righteous judgment, extending, like the "day of grace," over a full and future dispensation.

Let me now, before I conclude, briefly sum up the programme of events to which our study must be restricted, as incident to, and con-

nected with, "the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ." I gave you a brief sketch of the literal fulfilment of the sufferings of Christ. We are now to see whether all these sufferings were not prefigured, in type, in each of the dispensations; and if whether there is not also foreshadowed "the glories that should follow." I purposely say "GLORIES," for the words are plural, and Wicklif translates it so—"and the latter glories." The Rheims translation has it—"the glories following" the sufferings of Christ. We design to investigate what is *revealed* prophetically of these "glories." The glory of Christ as "Son of God"; the glory manifested by Christ "as Son of Man"; "the glory of the house of David"; "the glory of the celestial as one, and the glory of the terrestrial as another," 1 Cor. xv. 39; the "partakers of the heavenly glory," Heb. iii. 1; "the first trusters in Christ," Eph. i. 12; "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," Col. i. 12; "with the sphere of their heavenly inheritance." And here I must pause a moment to regret the great and just cause of offence given by a certain class of the advocates of the Second Coming of Christ, who have so confounded the express revelations of the heavenly glory of "the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven"; who, in defiance of the plainest revelations, have brought the Church from the third heavens, and, as one of them expressed it, "Camped them between the Red Sea and the Euphrates, every man under his vine, and every man under his fig-tree, no man making them afraid." Now, that the household of faith, the kings and priests unto God, the bride of the Lamb, rising from "the marriage supper," should be converted into tillers of the earth, may well shock the least sensitive Christianity. But is this a cause why the study of the revealed will of God is to be set aside? It is the very argument to pursue it, and scripturally to rebut such errors and point out the mass of confusion their teachers are involved in. Another view adopted by many zealous advocates of the Pre-millennial Advent of Jesus Christ, is locating the millennial dispensation upon the new heavens and the new earth. Such is the school of Cummings and others. And this has given a handle to the post-millennial writers, who have not been slow in exposing so clear an error, and proving, as they can satisfactorily do, that a dispensation which has still to do with *mortals* cannot take place on the scene of immortality, which the new heavens and the new earth are; and from thence, draw their hasty inference, that the second advent of Christ is post-millennial.

These are some of the arguments that are brought to bear against the pre-millennial advent; and you may rest assured, that, had they been sound and unanswerable, I should never have taken the responsibility of

urging views diametrically opposed to the teachings of this school. But to proceed. We shall further see the calling of the Church, and its declension; the progress of the "kingdom of heaven," from the sower of the seed of the kingdom to the net drawn on shore, and its ultimate judgment; "the second coming of Christ and the first resurrection"; "the marriage of the Lamb"; "The day of his wrath"; "the millennial dispensation," its progress, its doom, and its judgment; the kingdoms resigned by the Son into the hands of the Father, all enemies having been subdued; the final resurrection, and judgment of the "great white throne"; the creation of the new heavens and the new earth; the everlasting state; "God all and in all." Such are the subjects before us—truths of such deep import, that, to be justly appreciated, should call, not for the excitement of a speculative curiosity, but for the fervent prayers and steady search into the word of God to see if these things be so or not.

May we now, and each time we meet for the consideration of these solemnly revealed facts, have our hearts filled with the manifestation of the love, the wisdom, and the power of God. Let us seriously consider the circumstances under which we find ourselves. Born into this scene, a world in revolt against the Majesty of Heaven!—"the arch enemy the devil," described as "a murderer from the beginning," "a liar and the father of it," the hidden and mysterious instigator, "that works in the hearts of the children of disobedience," "the spirit of the air,"—using every fiendish art to entice us to our ruin; the long forbearing mercy of God tolerating the scene for nigh six thousand years, whilst mercifully providing a refuge against the destruction impending—the marvellous scheme whereby "He could be just and yet the justifier" of him that believeth, and therefore *trusteth*, in Jesus; the wondrous wisdom displayed in the salvation of the sinner, so that as by one man came death, so by one man cometh the deliverance from death;—can we, I say, contemplate ourselves appearing on such a scene as this and actually playing our part in it, with such tremendous alternatives glaring at us, and not at once feel that he who fritters away his existence, his precious moments of life, in the so-called important affairs of time, wrongs his own soul; mistakes the true end of his being; trifles with eternity; and endangers his future condition. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you."